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Alternatives for Expansion ...

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ALTERNATIVES

for

EXPANSION OF CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

WORKING DRAFT

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Comments should be sent within 30 days to:

CRATERS OF THE MOON PLANNING TEAM
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DENVER SERVICE CENTER/TWE
P.O. Box 25287 Denver, CO 80225-0287

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Legislation (H.R. 3782) has been introduced to establish a national park and preserve in southeastern Idaho, which would include and add to the present Craters of the Moon National Monument. Although there is local and statewide support for a national park, there is little consensus on the boundaries and management concepts.

The National Park Service's *Reconnaissance Survey, Expansion of Craters of the Moon National Monument* (1989), discussed the national significance of the Great Rift system and adjoining areas of the Snake River Plain. That document should be referred to for resource descriptions, landownership, and other information about the study area. The survey concluded that, as a whole, the Great Rift system, the deepest known open volcanic rift on earth and the longest volcanic rift in the continental United States, is nationally significant and that it deserves additional protection, but that it does not meet the criteria for designation as a national park (see appendix A). Furthermore, administration by the National Park Service (NPS) is not required to provide additional resource protection; some modification of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) management emphasis would provide adequate legal protection under their administration. In the area under consideration for expansion, BLM has designated several areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC); these areas receive special emphasis on the protection of natural and cultural resources. Proposed BLM wilderness designation for much of the area considered for expansion, along with designation of additional areas of critical environmental concern, would further enhance protection.

Because of resource significance and public interest, the Park Service has been requested by the Idaho congressional delegation to continue to the next step, a study of alternatives. A study of alternatives generally requires extensive fieldwork to provide an information base upon which to make alternative boundary and management recommendations. Funding has not been available to conduct field investigations, and we have relied on available information, primarily from the BLM. The alternatives in this report are therefore conceptual, recognizing that the boundaries will need "fine-tuning."

SCOPE OF REPORT

This report discusses (1) objectives and concerns of various interest groups, individuals, and agencies, and (2) alternative management concepts, some of which might accomplish various objectives and resolve concerns.

Neither the BLM nor the Park Service has selected a preferred alternative, and inclusion of an alternative does not imply endorsement by either agency. The document is intended only to stimulate further discussion. Alternatives may be combined, eliminated, or new ones developed as discussions continue.

WHY AN EXPANDED PARK?

Idaho does not have a national **park**, although there are several national park system units in the state, including Nez Perce National Historical Park and City of Rocks National Reserve. National park designation is most prestigious and an objective of most expansion supporters. Various interest groups seek to achieve different objectives with expansion of

Craters of the Moon National Monument into a national park. Some probably would be satisfied with renaming the existing area as a national park. Others want a much larger national park. Designation of the entire Great Rift system area as a national park or national monument, however, would undoubtedly not be acceptable to the grazing/hunting interests, even if these rights were protected in the legislation. (To protect existing grazing/hunting uses in some areas, it would be appropriate to establish a preserve or other administrative category.)

To other interest groups, an increase in tourism is the primary objective, and a large block of land to appear on maps as a national park is seen as a means to this objective. Crystal Ice Cave was a draw for travelers following the interstate along the Snake River. The area was abandoned by the concessioner, and the cave is closed to the public. Facilities, marginal to begin with, have deteriorated, and the natural features have been severely compromised. There is expectation by some interest groups that the Park Service would restore this facility as a significant tourist draw.

To other interest groups, the issue is not so much the name or size, but the administrative policies applied. Generally, the Park Service has tried to keep **national parks** free from activities such as grazing and hunting. There is some public apprehension when these activities are permitted in areas under NPS administration. Cooperative administration also presents problems when the managing agencies have significantly differing philosophies. Conflicts are bound to arise. This could be a problem where existing grazing allotments are split between two agencies to manage, as is proposed in the pending legislation.

Another interest group sees national park designation as a means to achieve a highway between Arco and Minidoka. The highway would provide access to the park expansion areas while reducing travel distances between the Burley/Rupert area, the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, and the seed potato farms near Arco. Access to hunting areas would also be improved.

AGENCY CONCERNS

Establishing and Promoting Tourism in the Southern Area

Designation of the Wapi/King's Bowl/Crystal Ice Cave area as a national park would raise expectations for increased tourism in the region, and the Park Service is concerned about these high expectations. National park designation would not necessarily increase visitation; most of the area included in the expansion would be managed as wilderness, and there are few "spectacular" features in the southern area of interest to visitors. In contrast to the diverse volcanic formations and varied topography in the existing monument, the harsh lava flows and the lack of topographic variety in the southern area would make the area uninviting as a destination for many visitors. Although significant, the Great Rift system is not the tourist attraction sought by various interests in southeastern Idaho. Publicity about the "new park" would probably initially increase visitation to the area, but this would taper off as the traveling public learns of the lack of facilities and the harshness of the area.

If NPS administration is legislated in the southern area, it will take considerable effort to develop a focal point around Crystal Ice Cave/King's Bowl for visitors. The Park Service would normally prepare a general management plan for the park before proceeding with any development. That process can take several years; however, there will be pressure for immediate improvements in this area. Virtually all existing facilities, including trails, would need to be replaced or drastically reconstructed. It would take extensive research to determine **IF** cave visitation should be allowed and **HOW** to restore the ice cave. The trail

into King's Bowl is in poor condition and might not be safe for visitor use. A reconstructed interpretive trail in the King's Bowl area and possibly a nature trail in Wapi Park could offer visitors something to explore in addition to the ice cave (if it is ever reopened). For the more adventurous, there are rugged hiking opportunities throughout the area. National park visitors would expect a campground(s). The lack of water and attractive terrain limit the possibilities. (Locations for campgrounds, if any, would be determined during future planning efforts.) The Park Service would need extensive funding to install utility systems, upgrade access roads, and develop trails, waysides, and a modest visitor center with exhibits and information about areas to explore on both NPS and BLM lands. Some of these actions could be implemented as an interim approach until a general management plan was completed for the entire area under NPS administration or a joint management plan was completed with BLM.

Administrative Concerns

Ensuring protection of the significant resources of the Great Rift system should be the primary objective of any movement to expand Craters of the Moon National Monument. The Park Service and the BLM are equally concerned about protection of the natural and cultural resources of the area. Much of the land being proposed as a national park or preserve has been proposed for wilderness, and BLM is in the process of evaluating additional adjacent areas. These areas include the Sand Butte, Raven's Eye, Little Deer, and Bear Den Butte wilderness study areas.

The Park Service and the BLM have agreed on a boundary modification for the northwest corner of the monument to include the entire drainage basin of the monument's water resources and place the monument boundary along identifiable topographic features. The change would simplify enforcement of hunting regulations and reduce trespass grazing. This or similar modifications should be incorporated into any legislation. Furthermore, any legislation should present boundaries that follow topographic or other readily identifiable features (as much as possible) to simplify management and administration.

BLM has submitted a recommendation for a Great Rift Wilderness Area. The proposed expanded park boundary, while similar, does not exactly follow the proposed BLM wilderness boundaries and includes areas now open to hunting and grazing. The proposed boundary is often in lava flows, which makes the boundary extremely difficult to mark and administer and could preclude designation of the wilderness as now proposed. If the expanded park is intended to include only the lava flows, the proposed wilderness boundary should be followed. It would be preferable to have wilderness designation completed with any expansion legislation.

Any legislation should provide some latitude in determining final boundaries. Section 2(e) of H.R. 3782 allows six months for preparation of a legal description of the park and preserve. Sections 2(b) and (c) give approximate acreage. This appears to provide the administering agencies some latitude in determining final boundaries that minimize administrative conflicts. Six months might prove to be inadequate due to the rugged landscape and the need for additional studies.

The cost for surveying the proposed BLM wilderness boundary has been estimated at $980,000. The cost would be even higher to survey the larger area in the proposed legislation. Funds to accomplish the necessary surveys, initiate planning efforts, and establish an initial NPS presence on former BLM lands <u>are not ensured</u> with the passage of legislation. Any transition from BLM to NPS administration would require some time to accomplish and should not compromise either agency's existing programs.

The proposed legislation boundary includes some areas under NPS administration where hunting and/or grazing would be permitted. Under the proposed legislation, the Park Service would manage grazing allotments that are contiguous with BLM allotments. Several current allotments would be divided between NPS and BLM administration, requiring some ranchers to deal with both agencies. The Park Service has little expertise in grazing management, and it would be inefficient to have two agencies carrying on the same role in adjoining areas.

H.R. 3782 permits grazing (but not hunting) in the park, but section 2(f) states that any regulation applicable to the monument is "deemed" applicable to the park. There is some concern that the legislation could be interpreted to allow grazing on present monument lands or, conversely, to allow the Park Service to prohibit grazing throughout the park. It would be preferable to define boundaries so that grazing and hunting are not included under NPS management. The lack of readily identifiable boundaries would complicate management of these activities and make the enforcement of hunting regulations extremely difficult. Hunting and grazing are generally not compatible uses in areas intended for intensive visitor use such as the King's Bowl area. If the King's Bowl/Wapi Park area is to become a focal point for visitation, hunting on adjacent lands could be a safety hazard. An access corridor, without hunting, should be provided.

If the legislation is intended to recognize the nationally significant Great Rift system, the Open Crack Rift Set, which some propose deleting from the legislation, should be included to present the full spectrum of significant features. Similarly, geologically unrelated features, such as Big Southern Butte, logically should not be included in the park.

The dual names included in the legislation would probably confuse visitors and complicate interpretation. Simplifying the name of the proposed park unit would reduce visitor confusion and simplify promotion. Calling the area Great Rift National Park and Preserve would recognize the true significance of the resources; the existing monument developed area could be the Craters of the Moon unit. Of course, the mystique of the existing name would be lost.

The BLM reports some instances of hazardous waste dumping in areas being considered for NPS administration. The extent of the problem is not fully known, but it is known that ranchers have disposed of various materials, including agricultural chemicals, on BLM lands. The Park Service would not be able to accept lands containing hazardous wastes until they are clean. However, if these lands are transferred to the Park Service, cost for cleanup could be high.

Other issues to be studied include air quality (the monument is a class I air quality area), mineral rights, and other valid claims in the areas being considered for inclusion in an expanded monument.

ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives present different management concepts and briefly discuss the manner in which each concept addresses the objectives and concerns of individuals, groups, and agencies. Administrative responsibility is indicated in parentheses.

The alternatives being considered are as follows:

Administrative Alternatives

Alternative A – No action

Alternative B – H.R. 3782 - Craters of the Moon National Park & Great Rift National Preserve (four units, all administered by NPS)

Alternative C – Rename the monument Craters of the Moon National Park (NPS)

Alternative D – Create the Great Rift National Science Reserve (BLM as lead agency)

Cooperative NPS/BLM Management Alternatives

Alternative E – Great Rift National Park (NPS) and Preserve (BLM)

Alternative F – Craters of the Moon National Monument (NPS) and Great Rift National Conservation Area (BLM)

It should be noted that only one alternative (the pending legislation) would include the Big Southern/Cedar Butte areas and none would ensure construction of a highway.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES - CRATERS OF THE MOON EXPANSION

The alternatives presented are intended to stimulate further discussion. Alternatives may be combined, eliminated, or new ones developed as discussions continue. Neither the BLM nor the Park Service has selected a preferred alternative, and inclusion of an alternative does not imply endorsement by either agency.

ALTERNATIVE A

No Action

No change in administration, no change in existing uses

ALTERNATIVE B

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL PARK & GREAT RIFT NATIONAL PRESERVE

Includes Big Southern/Cedar Buttes
All NPS administration
(Stallings' bill)

Establishes national park in Idaho, recognizes most of the Great Rift system and unrelated areas as nationally significant, difficult to administer, potential conflicts with existing uses in areas under NPS management, strong NPS identity, possible increase in tourism

ALTERNATIVE C

Rename the monument
CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL PARK

Establishes a national park in Idaho, no change in administration, no change in existing uses, possible minor increase in tourism, no recognition of the significance of the Great Rift system

---------- COOPERATIVE NPS/BLM MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES ----------

ALTERNATIVE D

GREAT RIFT NATIONAL SCIENCE RESERVE

BLM lead agency with NPS, state, and other agencies cooperating

Recognizes all of Great Rift system as nationally significant scientific area, emphasis on research, resource management and education, no change in administration, possible future effect on existing uses, no effect on tourism

ALTERNATIVE E

GREAT RIFT NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

NPS/BLM cooperative management

Establishes national park in Idaho, recognizes most of the Great Rift system as nationally significant, no conflict with existing uses, possible increase in tourism

Option: NPS administration of Wapi Lava Field/King's Bowl area as part of park; no hunting or grazing in park causes some conflict with existing uses

ALTERNATIVE F

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT & GREAT RIFT NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

NPS/BLM cooperative management

Recognizes most of the Great Rift system and adjoining lands as nationally significant, possible future effect on some existing uses due to recreational use in Laidlaw Park area, minimal effect on tourism but highest for regional recreation potential

These two alternatives emphasize readily identifiable boundaries for ease of administration, continued BLM management of existing uses in areas under their administration, and no grazing or hunting on NPS administered areas. Private lands, if included, would be acquired on a willing-seller basis.

ADMINISTRATIVE ALTERNATIVES

Four administrative alternatives (A-D) would emphasize continued cooperation by the Park Service and BLM under an existing memorandum of understanding. Alternative B would shift large areas from BLM to NPS administration. Alternatives C and D would be changes in administrative designation with little effect on management policies.

ALTERNATIVE A – NO ACTION

Concept

The existing national monument would continue to be administered by the Park Service with adjacent lands administered by BLM.

Some modest changes are proposed for the northwest corner of the monument to protect water resources, place the boundary along identifiable topographic features, and ease management problems for both the Park Service and BLM.

Much of the BLM lands adjacent to the monument would continue to be managed as wilderness, and select areas would be managed as areas of critical environmental concern. Under the BLM planning process other areas of critical environmental concern could be identified. Most of the remaining area being considered for expansion would continue to be managed under BLM multiple use policies.

Under existing cooperative agreements, the Park Service and the BLM would continue to assist each other in resource management, interpretation, and other activities.

Discussion

This alternative would not satisfy the interests seeking a national park in Idaho or those seeking increased tourism through a strong NPS presence outside the existing monument.

The significant resources of the Great Rift system would continue to be protected under existing BLM administrative policies.

Wilderness status for BLM lands would be determined by Congress through the normal legislative process, and select resources could receive additional protection under the BLM planning process.

Existing conditions would continue for the ranching and hunting interests.

Generally, funding restraints limit both agencies' efforts to cooperate in interpretation and other activities.

There would be no additional costs associated with this alternative.

ALTERNATIVE B – CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL PARK AND GREAT RIFT NATIONAL PRESERVE

Four units under NPS administration
As defined in H.R. 3782 introduced in the Congress November 20, 1989

Concept

A large area of the Great Rift system plus additional lands east of the Great Rift system including Big Southern Butte and Cedar Butte would make up the three-unit **Craters of the Moon National Park**. The area containing the Open Crack and a portion of the King's Bowl rift sets (connecting two units of the park) would be designated the **Great Rift National Preserve**. Both the park and preserve would be under the administration of the Park Service.

Hunting and grazing would be permitted in the preserve, and grazing would be permitted in the national park.

BLM and the Park Service would coordinate the opening and closing of grazing seasons and could cooperate to provide a unified interpretive program.

Discussion

This alternative would satisfy the interest groups promoting a national park in Idaho. The benefit to tourism would be difficult to predict. A strong NPS presence in the southern unit would enhance the potential to attract tourists. Experience has shown that there could be an initial increase in visitation with national park designation. However, the area under consideration lacks diversity, and many of the additional volcanic features would be of little interest to the general public; the existing monument has the more "spectacular" features and would continue to be the focal point for visitors. A major effort would be needed to provide a quality visitor experience in the added areas.

The proposed park boundary does not follow the proposed wilderness boundaries (topographic and lava margin features), which would make the boundary extremely difficult to mark and administer. For the most part, the boundary of the north unit seems to be within the lava fields, but there are some small patches where grazing would be permitted (and hunting might occur); the south park unit would contain both small pockets and fairly large areas of permitted grazing. The lack of readily identifiable boundaries would also make the enforcement of hunting regulations extremely difficult. This situation would create unnecessary confusion and complexity. With some boundary modifications, these problems could be reduced. Keeping the preserve under BLM administration would avoid many problems.

Because the proposed park boundaries do not follow the wilderness proposal, a new wilderness proposal would be required.

Discussion (cont.)

Wilderness status for these lands would not be resolved for some time.

The Park Service would manage grazing allotments contiguous with BLM grazing allotments. Although grazing rights would be protected under the proposed legislation, conflicts would be likely due to differing management policies. Grazing would be allowed in and hunting would be permitted on preserve lands adjacent to the King's Bowl area. If the King's Bowl area became a focal point for visitation, the grazing and hunting activities would not be compatible with the desired visitor experience. Hunters and ranchers would also have to deal with an additional agency.

The proposed Big Southern Butte unit is not related to the same geologic forces that created the Great Rift system represented in Craters of the Moon. It would make little sense to call Big Southern Butte "Craters of the Moon National Park." Other existing uses on or near Big Southern Butte might conflict with NPS administrative policies.

Costs for NPS administration would increase significantly. Development costs to provide facilities for management, staff, and visitors would be substantial. Management complexities due to grazing and hunting and unnatural boundaries would offset presumed advantages of total NPS administration.

ALTERNATIVE C – RENAME THE MONUMENT CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL PARK

Concept

The existing national monument would be renamed **Craters of the Moon National Park**. Except for the name change, this alternative would be the same as alternative A and would include the minor boundary changes in the northwest corner of the monument.

Discussion

This alternative would satisfy some special interests – there would be a national park in Idaho. The park would not be large, and tourism patterns would not significantly change.

The significant resources of the Great Rift system would continue to be protected under existing administrative policies.

Wilderness status for BLM lands would be determined by Congress through the normal legislative process, and select resources could receive additional protection under the BLM planning process.

Existing conditions would continue for the ranching and hunting interest groups. NPS lands would not receive any different level of protection due to the name change.

Generally, funding restraints limit both agencies' efforts to cooperate in interpretation and other activities.

The costs would be modest, primarily to change signs, brochures, and stationery. Publications would have to be revised as they are reprinted.

ALTERNATIVE D – GREAT RIFT NATIONAL SCIENCE RESERVE

Concept

Under this alternative the Great Rift system, including the Craters of the Moon and Wapi lava fields and adjacent lands, would be designated as a national science reserve. The lands would continue under their current administration.

The science reserve would be a cooperative effort by the state of Idaho, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the National Park Service for scientific research, preservation, and public education. BLM and the Park Service would be responsible for continued protection of the resources under their administrations. The Idaho university system would coordinate scientific studies, and the Park Service would be responsible for public education and interpretation. Collection of baseline data for the comparison of relatively undisturbed and heavily disturbed lands and the changes occurring naturally or due to management practices would be encouraged. Air and water quality monitoring, continued study of the geologic process, and inventory of unique species are examples of research programs that would be carried out on a cooperative basis.

The area within the reserve would include lava fields and other features of basaltic volcanism associated with the Great Rift system and portions of adjacent sagebrush grassland ecosystems (including foothills of the Pioneer Mountains).

An objective of the reserve would be continuing funding for the varied research programs that often are cut in agency budgets.

Discussion

This alternative would not satisfy the objectives of the various interest groups promoting a national park in Idaho. The Great Rift system would be recognized as nationally significant for its scientific and educational value. The emphasis on scientific studies would do little to increase tourism in the area.

The reserve would encompass greater diversity in landforms and vegetation types common to the eastern Snake River Plain than would any of the other alternatives. It is the only alternative to include the entire Great Rift system. Coordinated, cooperative research should reduce duplication and increase the value of the projects for the participating agencies.

There would be no initial impact on grazing and hunting, but scientific studies could lead to changes in existing management policies for all or parts of the area.

Wilderness status for BLM lands would be determined by Congress through the normal legislative process.

The costs could be significant for the cooperating agencies if an active research and education program becomes a reality. Staff would be needed to coordinate the program; research camp facilities, which could also serve as public education centers, could have a high initial cost.

The concept, although not new, would need discussion and refinement. Similarly, the boundary indicated (based on a USGS study area) would need further analysis to ensure that significant features have been included.

COOPERATIVE NPS/BLM MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The following two cooperative management alternatives (E and F) would emphasize minimal conflicts with existing uses, readily identifiable boundaries, and legislated cooperative management that would allow both agencies to expend funds for resource management, development, interpretation, etc., on lands under the other agency's administration. Cooperative administration would continue BLM management of grazing and hunting with the Park Service taking the lead in providing unified interpretive services. This approach would not necessarily require NPS staff in the BLM areas, although that would certainly be one approach. The Park Service could provide interpretive planning services, coordinate publications, and participate in joint training sessions with BLM providing the on-site personnel. In addition, cooperation in resource management, research, law enforcement, planning, and other activities would be possible.

Under this concept, numerous boundary configurations would be possible for the various units, and they could be designed to minimize the grazing, hunting, and administrative conflicts discussed under alternative B. The wilderness proposals could be debated and enacted as part of the legislation.

Legislation should include:

a statement prohibiting hunting and grazing on NPS-administered lands

a statement providing for continuation of existing valid uses on BLM lands (with appropriate wording to permit future change)

provisions for cooperative planning and management, including the expenditure of funds by both agencies for development and services on the other agency's lands and in nearby communities within and adjacent to the newly designated units

provisions for "fine-tuning" the boundary following passage of legislation

a provision that private lands would be acquired only on a willing-seller basis unless there is a threat to significant resources

A clear statement in the legislation that hunting and grazing would not be permitted on NPS-administered lands would let ranchers and hunters know where they stand rather than continually speculating on the Park Service's "true" intentions. (Existing valid rights would continue on any private lands within BLM or NPS areas.) The administration of grazing allotments would be left to the BLM experts, and the boundaries would be drawn to minimize the impact on these traditional uses.

A clear intent to permit expenditures of funds on lands not administered by the agency (e.g., expenditure of NPS funds on BLM lands) would avoid future questions on the legality of such expenditures. This intent should cover interpretive facilities, visitor services, and resource protection (including staff and support facilities) in the units managed by the other agency and in adjacent communities. The legislation should require a joint general management plan for the new units, allowing three years from funding to complete the plan.

ALTERNATIVE E – COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT – GREAT RIFT NATIONAL PARK (NPS) AND PRESERVE (BLM)

Concept

This concept would provide a large area of national significance under a single name - a **national park and preserve.**

The north park unit would encompass the existing monument and the northern part of the proposed BLM Great Rift Wilderness, with minor adjustments to protect water resources and place the present monument northwest boundary along identifiable topographic features. The Park Service would generally manage to the edge of the lava fields on the north, with most of the additions managed as wilderness. Huddles Hole and some small nonlava areas would be included within the park boundary.

The south preserve unit would include the area of the proposed BLM Wapi Lava Field Wilderness area plus a connection to the north unit to include Wapi Park, the Open Crack Rift Set, Bear Trap Lava Tube, Split Butte, and the King's Bowl Rift Set. (This area is now in three BLM districts, depending on the final boundary, and might better be placed under the administration of one district.) The preserve would be managed under existing BLM policies, hopefully with additional funding for resource management and visitor services.

An option to place the Wapi Lava Field and a small portion of the King's Bowl area under NPS administration should also be given consideration. This would be similar to the pending legislation.

Discussion

This concept would provide a large national park and adjacent preserve under a single name, maximizing the tourism potential in the name. It has the advantages of clear agency responsibilities.

The major features of the Great Rift system would be recognized as nationally significant. Although administered by two agencies, the public would likely perceive the area as a single entity.

The Park Service would not be managing hunting and grazing, thus avoiding conflict with area hunters and ranchers.

This alternative would not significantly increase NPS administrative costs other than relatively minor costs as mentioned under alternative C plus some costs to patrol the additional boundary. NPS costs could increase significantly if the Park Service becomes an active participant in visitor services and interpretation in the preserve, as is intended under this concept. The added significance of the preserve could require additional funding and staff for BLM for visitor services, interpretation, and resource management.

The option to include the Wapi Lava Field and a small portion of the King's Bowl area under NPS administration would establish a strong NPS presence in this area. There would be some conflict with existing uses because grazing and hunting would not be permitted in NPS-administered areas. The conflicts could be kept to a minimum by carefully defining the boundary. Costs for major improvements to facilities at Crystal Ice Cave/King's Bowl would be significant.

ALTERNATIVE F – COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT – CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT (NPS) AND GREAT RIFT NATIONAL SCIENCE RESERVE (BLM)

Concept

Under this alternative the Park Service would continue to administer the existing national monument and BLM would manage the national conservation area lands under existing policies (or modified policies to reflect the higher status). This concept would recognize a large area of national significance, including resources not geologically related to the Great Rift system. Numerous boundary configurations would be possible. The one shown would encompass most of the lava fields associated with the Great Rift system.

The areas adjacent to the existing monument identified for BLM wilderness designation, plus other significant resource areas and connecting links to include the major features of the Great Rift system, would be designated a national conservation area (or a similar special designation) to recognize the significant natural and cultural resources of the area.

The conservation area would include features such as Laidlaw Park and Huddles Hole - managed for multiple use but recognized as contributing features in the conservation area concept. Laidlaw Park could offer camping and hiking opportunities not specifically available under other alternatives. Most of Huddles Hole, included as a possible campground site and wilderness threshold, is private land and would only be acquired on a willing-seller basis.

The Park Service and BLM would cooperate in the management of the conservation area, with the Park Service taking the lead role in interpretive programs.

Discussion

This concept would provide a large area of national significance but would not establish a national park. The monument would remain essentially the same. The concept would not satisfy those who desire a national park or those who anticipate increased tourism due to national park status. The two areas would not be linked by a common name.

The Park Service would not be directly involved in the administration of the conservation area; there would be no conflict with area hunters and ranchers.

The national conservation area would include additional grasslands, which would provide needed diversity for recreational uses not available on the lava fields. However, elk are returning to Laidlaw Park and that area is being managed to preserve natural grasslands. Managing these lands for more diversified recreational use could lead to some future conflicts with the ranching and hunting groups.

Potential conflicts in administrative philosophy would be avoided (although the Park Service will always seek reasonably compatible administration of adjacent lands).

This alternative would not increase NPS administrative costs, but would require additional staff and funding to provide interpretive services in the conservation area. The added significance of the conservation area would require substantial additional funding and staff for BLM resource management and visitor services.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY FROM *RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY* *

The National Park Service has completed a reconnaissance survey of the lands southeast and southwest of Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, to determine if some of these areas could be recommended as additions to the present monument. An evaluation was conducted of the national significance of the resources in these proposed additions, and the suitability/feasibility of such a change in status was examined. Possible management strategies for the areas were also discussed but would require further analysis.

This reconnaissance survey concludes that, as a whole, the Great Rift system, the deepest known open volcanic rift on earth and the longest volcanic rift in the continental U.S., is nationally significant although many of the individual features are well represented in the national park system at Craters of the Moon National Monument and other units. The Great Rift system has integrity as a relatively unspoiled example of the natural forces shaping our planet and is of major scientific interest. Other features within the study area but outside the Great Rift system, including Big Southern Butte and Cedar Butte, were not concluded to be of national significance although they are interesting features of regional and local significance.

The Great Rift system would be suitable as an addition to the national park system. Its significant themes and features are considered underrepresented in the Columbia Plateau Natural Region and, under current BLM management policies, some of these resources are currently not adequately protected or adequately presented for public enjoyment. Pending wilderness designation would offer a high degree of protection to the major lava flows of the Great Rift under BLM administration, but not to other significant features of the Great Rift system such as the Open Crack and Kings Bowl rift zones and Bear Trap lava tube, which would continue to be administered under multiple-use policies.

The Great Rift system is feasible as an addition to the national park system; however, it lacks the diversity of features generally associated with a national park and would best fit in the category of national monument. Most of the land is in federal ownership and is of a size and configuration that lends itself to long-term protection and public use. However, depending on the boundary selected and management objectives, development and management cost could be quite high, and existing uses, such as grazing and hunting, would be eliminated under NPS management unless directed otherwise in the legislation.

Boundary expansion would not necessarily improve or expand the visitor experience, and it would not improve management of the existing monument. Management strategies other than expansion with NPS management could be in the best public interest and would provide suitable resource protection and improved opportunities for visitor use. Direct Park Service management is not required to accomplish these objectives. This approach would require some modification of current BLM management priorities and policies. Consideration should also be given to a concept similar to El Malpais in New Mexico, where a BLM national conservation area and NPS national monument are cooperatively managed. This concept would place needed emphasis on resource protection and visitor use while permitting traditional, compatible uses to continue.

* Summary is from *Reconnaissance Survey, Expansion of Craters of the Moon National Monument*, National Park Service, Denver, Colorado, February 1989.

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